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Big Brother's Ears Are Getting Littler

*But They're Hearing More as Peeping
And Eavesdropping Business Booms,
Even in the Federal Government*

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"JUST THINK of the convenience of this one," said the last line of the magazine advertisement.

Above it was a drawing of a man with a sly, devilish look on his face. He was holding something called a Telephone Monitor to his ear.

"Hear two-way conversations without picking up receiver," said the ad for this "new, private listening device," that "weighs only 1 1/4 ounces!"

According to the ad, "more and more of the electronic devices designed for military use are being made available for civilians. This ingenious (just 1/2-inch thick) unit is one, and ingenious it is. Just lay it against a telephone, put the plug in your ear, and you can hear and record a 2-way conversation, clearly without touching or picking up the receiver.

"Pretty sly little gadget," says one version of the ad, "It fits in your pocket without a bulge."

And with just \$18.95 and a Diners Club card you can be the first in your neighborhood to have one.

That was in the January, 1964, edition of the Diners Club Magazine.

THIS IS only one of the many, many clever little gadgets you can use to become your own private ear. You too can eavesdrop electronically on your friends and neighbors.

These devices are easy to come by, so easy, in fact, that two congressional subcommittees are conducting inquiries into violations of privacy by the unrestricted sale of electronic snooping devices.

Federal law on invasion of privacy is almost non-existent and those state laws which exist are frequently vague and antiquated.

Congress passed a law in 1934 providing stiff penalties for wiretapping, but wiretapping is practiced with impunity and virtual immunity from Federal prosecution.

One reason is that the Government is hesitant about bringing attention to some of the devices it uses.

Most Government agencies, however, have a written policy which prohibits recording, transcribing, monitoring or listening in on phone calls without advance notification and approval.

The same holds true for the purchase, rent, leasing or borrowing of electronic or mechanical devices.

But the General Services Administration lists a host of such devices in its catalogue, and they are available to Government agencies which ostensibly do not allow them. One advertised GSA item is a "telephone adaptor for monitoring phone calls without a beep."

THE CONGRESSIONAL committees concerned with the proliferation of snooping devices are the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on administrative practices, headed by Sen. Edward V. Long (D-Mo.) and the special House government operations subcommittee. Long's committee will open invasion of privacy hearings next Thursday.

Bernard Fensterwald, counsel for the Senate subcommittee, said that last fall a detailed, five-page questionnaire concerning invasion of privacy was sent to 34 Government agencies.

He said returns so far indicate that phone monitoring,

peepholes, hidden recorders, and miniature transmitters are the primary snooping practices used in the Government.

Fensterwald said the subcommittee has not so far concerned itself with the snooping devices used by the Government's security agencies such as the FBI, CIA and the military.

A major concern of the committees is those devices which are available not only to Government agencies but also to the public at large.

For one thing, Federal Communications Commission regulations prohibit recording any telephone conversation without using a beeping device.

AND FURTHER, the telephone directory has a paragraph which says that if you hear a short "beep" tone about every 15 seconds, the conversation is being recorded.

"This signal is provided by the Telephone Company for your protection," says the phone book. "Use of a recorder without recorder-connector equipment containing a tone-warning device is contrary to the Company's tariffs and not permitted."

The devices generally available to the public frequently are not so sophisticated as the expensive, intricate super-professional investigator kits which run into thousands of dollars, but they will do.

But even the highly sophisticated gear is available to anyone who has the money.

The less expensive versions of the more sophisticated gear include:

- An "International-Police Room Probe" that "sets into wall—sees all!" according to advertisements. This item gives 172-degree-wide vision, is only as round as your finger, tucks into your pocket easily, is 3/4 inch across, telescopes out from one to 5 inches and costs \$8.95. This "little optical gem" according to its maker, is "made in Spain for use in Interpol, the international police organization."

- The International Audio-Wall Probe which you "just place against any wall," and it will "pick up sounds, voices in the next room," according to its ads. "This solid state space-age device has just been made available to the public from missile research and development," says the blurb. It weighs only 6 ounces and with it "you can detect the faintest of voices and sounds in the next room—good for knowing what the kids are doing without their realizing it."

- A miniature device which records only when it is activated by voice. You also eliminate give-away fumbling with switches because it works "without you touching a thing," according to a newspaper ad.

- A wristwatch microphone with a tiny wire that runs up under your sleeve to a miniature recorder. The well-dressed man also has his choice of a tie-clasp, cuff link or fountain pen microphone which cost \$24.95 each.

